

The Relation of the Sunday-school System to our Christian Patriotism.

ANNUAL SERMON,

IN BEHALF OF THE

American Sunday-School Union.

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A SERMON.

“Better is a poor and wise child than an old and foolish king.”—
Eccl. iv. 13.

HERE is a strong contrast: a child with a gray-haired man; a poor child with a king. How feeble the one, how powerful the other! But the child is already wise; the king, untaught by age, is obstinate in folly. Wait a few years, and the child may be on the throne, the king degraded to poverty. “Better is a poor child” educated in sound principles, “than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished.” The child, having begun in piety, will grow in virtue; the folly of the king is inveterate and his amendment beyond hope: the one gives promise of a long and honourable usefulness; the other is nigh an infamous end of a mischievous career.

This decision by the great preacher of the Old Testament is confirmed by the greater preacher of the New. Our adorable Lord, the founder of Christianity, has laid down two cardinal rules for the government of his church in the sanctification of the world, under the divine blessing: THE SPREAD OF TRUTH, and THE TRAINING OF CHILDREN.

The first, no sincere Protestant Christian may for a moment doubt; it is the characteristic distinguishing our religion from heathenism. Knowing that God is a Spirit, we know that he is not “worshipped by men’s

hands ;”* recognising our own spiritual nature, we can see no means of communication between the Divine Being and our own souls but *truth*, the life from God, which is the light of men.† The faith which unites us to Christ, as our Saviour, must be founded on, and maintained by the testimony of God alone. If we are asked the reason of our Christianity, our answer is: “we believe, therefore have we spoken.”‡ If asked again by what process we were brought to believe, we rejoin: “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”§ Hence our Lord declared before Pilate: “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth;”|| hence he prayed for his redeemed: “Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth;”¶ and hence he said, as his parting command: “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”*** Therefore do we rely upon no method of bringing back the world unto God, but THE DISSEMINATION OF TRUTH by word, ordinance and example.

The second rule, THE TRAINING OF CHILDREN, is equally clear from the teaching and practice of our all-wise Master. While he announced the glad tidings of salvation to all who would listen, his main reliance was upon the young; nay, he suffered no adult to enter his kingdom until, through a new birth, he became as a little child.†† He began his course on earth as a babe, that by the holy parable of his own blessed life, he might show the necessity of early piety to the highest perfec-

* Acts xvii. 25.

† John i. 14.

‡ Ps. cxvi. 10.

§ Rom. x. 17.

|| John xviii. 37.

¶ John xvii. 17.

*** Mark xvi. 15.

†† John iii. 3; Luke xviii. 17.

tion of Christian man ; and that the youngest child might be commended to his saving sympathy. He invited others to come unto him ; but he stooped to take the unconscious little ones upon his gentle bosom, announcing to his more than doubting disciples, that in such lay the strength of his kingdom.* He spent little pains on the hardened scribe, the self-righteous Pharisee, the bigoted priest, or the proud ruler ; but we read of his rejoicing in spirit, and saying : “ I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.”† When, in that only day of open triumph he had on earth, his entrance to Jerusalem and the temple typified the manifestation of his millennial glory ; he chose for his acclaiming heralds a choir of children,‡ to teach us that Hosannahs from such voices are the sure harbingers of his consummate praise. Nor did he require of Peter, and, with him, of the other apostles, only that they should feed his sheep ; but his first direction was : “ Feed my lambs ;” as though he had said, To feed the lambs is the best method of prospering my flock ; for if they be neglected, there will soon be no sheep.

It is after these two cardinal rules of our Lord’s appointment that the Sunday-school system has been framed, having for its sole object THE DISSEMINATION OF TRUTH, and for its principal method, THE TRAINING OF CHILDREN ; and we hold it to be not only in strict accordance with the economy of grace, but also a God-inspired return from the errors, mistakes and neglects

* Mark x. 14.

† Luke x. 21.

‡ Matt. xxi. 15.

of the church for eighteen centuries, to the spirit and practice of the most primitive Christianity, Jesus Christ himself.

While, however, our text asserts, with other Scriptures, the vast importance of educating the young for lives of righteousness, it conveys a lesson of the soundest political wisdom. "The preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem,"* and the decay of his bodily strength admonished him that the end of his days could not be far off.† It was natural, therefore, that his anxiety should be awakened respecting the future career of his son and heir-apparent; especially as Rehoboam gave but little promise of prudence and piety. The history of Israel and Judah had already shown, what the annals of other nations abundantly corroborate; that in the strongest hereditary despotism a monarch needs the utmost administrative sagacity to preserve his throne. The people, uprising in the original strength of their masses, may put down an imbecile or tyrannical king, and transfer the crown to the head of another, whose worth or talents have made him conspicuous, notwithstanding the lowness of his birth or the poverty of his life. Thus, then, speaks the royal preacher: "Better is a poor and wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished. For out of prison he cometh to reign; whereas also he that is born in his kingdom becometh poor."

This earnest counsel has yet more weighty meaning for us, my brethren, as Christian citizens of a wide and rapidly spreading republic. No monarch bears rule

* Ch. i. 12.

† Ch. xii.

over us, but HE who sits upon the eternal throne ; the political sovereignty is in the hands of the people, where it must remain, unless, becoming weak through vice or factious divisions, they suffer it to be wrenched from them by some patricidal gladiator, or heartless demagogue ; which may God in his mercy avert ! Every child growing up among us, be he poor or rich, foolish or wise, ignorant or educated, wicked or religious, will, on attaining manhood, exert a real, substantive influence on the government and destinies of our country. Even if any of you doubt the policy of our civil constitution, or desire a different order of things, your skepticism is too late, and the whispers of your wish would be drowned by the earthquake shout of federate millions, conscious of an irresistible will. The sovereignty of the people is a fact, and over the results for good or evil you have no control beyond your individual vote, except, by diffusing the leaven of truth through the mighty heaving mass, you persuade them to rule well ; or, by neglecting your opportunities, you leave them, so far as your agency is concerned, to moral corruption, self-tyranny and national suicide.

Besides, the word of God has solemnly declared our political obligations. Without defining positively what the system of government should be, it insists upon our loyal obedience to constituted authority ; and of this, our Divine Lord set us a notable example, in paying tribute to the Cæsar of the Romans, who had won their sway over the Jews by the sword. Our apostle, also, under the same domination says : " Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power

but of God : the powers that be are ordained of God.”* If this was the duty of the early Christians under a foreign rule, gained and upheld by force, it is surely ours, under a rule of laws established and maintained by the popular consent. The freedom of our institutions and our rights as citizens, do not absolve us from the allegiance thus imposed on us as Christians by our Almighty and absolute King, the Lord of heaven and earth. The legitimately expressed will of the people is the power ordained of God, to which we are by His will subject. What, therefore, the Scriptures asserted of kings, according to the mode of government existing when they were written, it now asserts of the popular sovereignty existing among us; not of the magistrates except as the representatives of the people, but of the people themselves, as the higher power. This, you will bear in mind, is not a human opinion, which we may adopt or deny, but the ordinance of God; as the apostle Peter says: “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king (or sovereign) as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him (that is the supreme power) for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well; as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.”† If questions respecting the right of resistance or protest in particular cases arise, as they have arisen, they are to be settled on the same principle under our system as under a monarchy. Therefore, when we read: “It is not for kings to drink wine nor for princes strong drink,

* Rom. xiii. 1.

† 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14, 15.

lest they drink and forget the law and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted;”* we are taught the danger to which the intemperance of the people would expose us, from a mad perversion of their authority, and our duty not only as Christian philanthropists, but as faithful citizens, having the welfare of our country at heart, to use all right means for the prevention of so ruinous an evil. When we hear the apostolical exhortation: “That, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men ; for kings, and all that are in authority ; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty;”† we learn the importance of prayer and thanksgiving for the people, that God may have mercy upon our nation, and bless it, by guiding the people in the exercise of their power. So, also, should the invocation of David for Solomon, “Give the king thy judgment, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king’s son,”‡ be employed by us to implore that Divine truth, through the energies of the Holy Spirit, may enlighten the mind and sanctify the will of the people.

A far greater responsibility, in these respects, lies upon us than upon the subjects of a monarchy. They may have no way of exerting any control over their sovereign, except by appeals to Him, in whose hands are the hearts of all men. We, Christian brethren, are part of the sovereignty ourselves, and share in the merits or demerits of the people’s action, according as we use the prerogatives of our citizenship ; nor can we estimate the efficiency, which He, who multiplies good

* Prov. xxxi. 4, 5.

† 1 Tim. ii. 2.

‡ Ps. lxxii. 1.

seed, some thirty, some sixty, some an hundred fold, may give to what we do for our country in His name.

The entire freedom which our laws guaranty to every man in the avowal and advocacy of his opinions, political, moral, or religious, throws open a wide field for zeal, that we may bring the best agencies to bear upon the understandings and hearts of our fellow-rulers ; but, at the same time, it gives like opportunities for working mischief to the evil or unwise. Mischief, ever busy, can be checked or prevented only by good out-working it.

Our system has been, and still is, eminently one of experiment. We are daily evolving methods of policy, rejecting or confirming what has been tried, and, disregardful of precedent, boldly venturous in novelty. Hence, the public mind, though impulsive and agitated, is lively and far more pliant than when the weight of inveterate prejudice renders it torpid or obstinate. The fire is always under the crucible, and fresh elements may constantly be added to those already in fusion. It is for us to see, that, by our earnest industry, principles of truth and righteousness are supplied so liberally as to more than neutralize the malignant force of error and sin. The course of a nation is rarely backward from decay to prosperity ; and it must be among us, that, when wrong in opinion or practice acquires a popular majority, right will not soon nor easily regain the sway, because the native bent of the human character is downward ; but prosperity also becomes most dangerous, when not severely regulated, while amidst the greatest popular triumphs of virtue there is reason to fear, lest evil, assuming the angelic garb, may divert

the impulse gained by such excitement, and precipitate the best cause into ruin. As there are men who "choose the livery of heaven to serve the devil in," so there are those among us who will call themselves by any name, however pure, and profess any principles, however noble, that they may abuse the trust accorded to their seeming virtue for selfish and, therefore, hurtful schemes. None but the conscientious (and none are conscientious but the God-fearing) can be relied upon in the momentous struggle, for the mastership over our beloved country, between the powers of light and the powers of darkness. If the disciples of Christ are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, to them mainly we must look for the true prosperity of a republic, whose only strength is the virtue and intelligence of its constituents. There is no virtue so strong as that to which the love of Christ constrains us, no intelligence so sound as the wisdom sent down from on high. Let Christians of our land be faithful in the exercise of their citizenship, and the perpetuity of its welfare will be secured, "for if God be for us, who can be against us?" Let them neglect their high duties, and ruin must soon follow, "for if the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Delay is not merely dangerous, but fatal. Every day is pregnant with the destiny of years; every year stamps an indelible character on far succeeding generations.

Our population is rapidly spreading itself over a vast territory. The history of the world besides has nothing analogous to this. In the primitive dispersings of the race, each company of emigrants threw off their allegiance to their native country, and went forth armed to

found a new nation. They carried with them the habits in which they had been educated, soon to be greatly modified by their changed circumstances; but they exerted no retroactive influence over the land they had left. The most powerful republics, subsequently, grew up within narrow limits. The Athenian territory was a triangular peninsula, having the mountains of Bœotia with the Euripus for its base, and its sides washed by the sea; but eighty miles long and of an average breadth not more than forty; yet, widely as the Athenian people extended their sway by conquest and colony, they held the government in the hands of their twenty-five thousand citizens, and tolerated no dictation from abroad. The same was true of Rome on the Tiber, when mistress of the world. She alone gave laws, but received none; and no representative from all her vast dominions ever had a vote in her senate or the assemblies of her people. The Helvetic Cantons became strong in their narrow sovereignties, leagued together for mutual support, but never spread their rule beyond their original limits. Holland, at one time the greatest commercial power of Europe, has never reached three millions of inhabitants on a densely populated soil; and though, at home, free beyond a parallel in the Old World, has ever been most despotic over its distant subjects. Great Britain, "on whose empire the sun never sets," gives from her insular throne commands to every climate, but makes all her foreign territories suppliants for the slightest favour at the bar of her parliament. Not so with us. The citizen who goes forth from the midst of us to build his log-cabin on the farthest borders of the newest State, has a vote as influential as though he stood at the polls

by our side. Mighty as we have already become, the valley between our great mountains is the cradle of, as yet, an infant nation destined to attain a gigantic strength, compared with which every other republic, past or present, will appear like a dwarf. Still we are one people, and the national will is the aggregate result of the suffrage of each individual citizen of all these millions. It is but yesterday, as it were, that the first pioneer paddled his canoe across the great river of the west, and already have we seen the power of the nation balanced upon the ridge of the Alleghanies, then ponderating on the other side. The child, born this day on the desert shore of Lake Superior, the blood-stained banks of the Rio Grande, or the beach of the Pacific, may, before his generation has passed away, be the president of fifty millions—for while our increase laughs at arithmetic, it is within the working of our national system. My friends, as well might one limb of the living anatomy seek to live apart from the rest, as we think to separate ourselves from any individual of our wide nation. Our blood flows through all these veins, and like the beating of one mighty heart is felt the action of the popular will. Strange as it may seem to the foreign observer, contrary to the forebodings of many an honest patriot, our extension, thus far, has consolidated the Union. We are now, with thirty States, more united, more sympathetic, stronger and more likely to endure than when we were thirteen. By a striking coincidence of discovery, through the subjugation of expansive vapour and of the lightning fire to the will of man, the moral distance between us has been lessened, while that of our habitations has increased

We can now send in many important directions, and shall soon in more, the tidings of the day, the voice of warning, the call for help, nay, the newspaper and even the book, with more ease and in less time, a thousand miles, than those of the last generation could a hundred. Every railroad is another sinew of energetic combination, every magnetic wire a new nerve of interchanging sympathy. It cannot be denied that there is reason for fear ; but surely there is greater reason for hope ; we may "rejoice" though it be "with trembling."

We are Christians, and if our faith be evangelical, we are moved by the love of Christ, who bought us with his own blood, infinitely more precious than silver and gold ; we are sanctified by his Spirit to follow his example of mercy, and have the riches of almighty God as the resources of our charity. Shall we then doubt the duty or the ability of Christian patriots to meet these increasing exigencies ? Shall the world's lust of gain exceed our zeal for souls ? Shall war summon willing instruments by tens of thousands, and the gospel of peace ask without success for messengers to bear the tidings of saving grace among our distant brethren ? Christians, it is a shame for us to hang our heads like cowards before the future, which Christ has claimed as his own, when we should and can put the Bible into every wagon that winds its way through the deep forest or ocean-wide prairie ; pour the Sabbath-light upon every clearing ; plant a church and Sunday-school with every settlement ; and cast the golden seed of divine truth behind every plough as it furrows the virgin soil. Let our people get beyond the privileges of education or the gospel, and their children will be

to us worse than foreigners ; let but the word of God be within every dwelling, every child know how to read it, the Sabbath bell call every heart to prayer, and we shall be all one in mind, feeling and principle, though our nation cover the continent.

The relations we sustain to other countries are of vast importance both to them and ourselves. With the establishment of our unprecedented government and Union, a new era dawned upon the world. The scoffing prophecies of our speedy downfall, as a certain consequence of our popular system, which then curled the lips of despotic and aristocratic power, have been silenced by ill-dissembled terrors, lest its example should overturn and out-live the strongest thrones. On the old continent, revolution has followed revolution, dynasty dynasty, reform reform, while we have become firmer, more united, less liable to decay, notwithstanding the rapid multiplication of our numbers. At least, the blessings of social peace, plentiful food, free exercise of conscience, are ours to a degree that mankind have never before known. The eyes of the poor and the oppressed are turned as longingly to our shores as those of Israel in Egypt towards Canaan. Each ship that has borne a crowd of emigrants, glad to leave the soil of their birth, and the graves of their ancestors, that they may find happy homes for their children and children's children, bears back tidings of a land flowing with milk and honey, to the mud-walled cabins where famine broods, and the gaunt infant dies upon the exhausted bosom of its starving mother. The early adventurers, who sought the New World of the west, were men of pride, covetous of gold and conquest ; those

who come now are humble petitioners for bread and peace. The best interests of our race are concerned with the result of our experiment. If it go on successfully, Europe will be as free as we are, or depopulated by emigration to us. Brethren, if we have any faith in the value of civil and religious liberty, any mercy for the oppressed, to break whose bonds our Lord and Master came, any love of that political morality which bids us look on our neighbour as ourselves, let us put forth all the energies of prayer and zeal, that the revived hope of a golden age be not proved a dream, by the failure of our people to live worthily of their vocation ; but let us also trust in God, that, through his blessing upon our fidelity as Christian citizens of this favoured land, every yoke may soon be broken, and there be neither a slave nor a tyrant on the face of the whole earth.

There is danger in this state of things. Among the hundreds of thousands who come and mingle with us as a nation, there are many who bring with them habits and prejudices unsuiting them to use aright their novel plenty and freedom. It cannot be otherwise than that disaster must result from such a heterogeneous influx among us, unless means, the most efficient, are taken to counteract the threatened evil. The covenant and providence of God have put those means within the reach of our faith and zeal ; for we cannot doubt the sufficiency of the gospel, which we have the most unlimited permission to employ in the salvation of our country. If the gospel fail in these circumstances to overcome error and sin, how can we hope for its triumph over the world ?

Especially, should we not give way to a desponding dread of that false Christianity, which, having ruled the greater part of Europe until it begins to crumble beneath its own weight, now seeks to gain the same sway over our land. The Roman Catholic superstition never can tyrannize in this country, if Christians are wise and faithful. A more than adamantine power of resistance is already secured in the tastes and customs of our people; an omnipotent active force is given us in the truth of God's holy word. A religion whose policy it is to attract by pompous show, and to beat down reason by human authority, must be rejected by men who will not allow their judges or officers of state the slightest insignia, and who are ready to battle until death for the right of free discussion. Popery, as it exists in the Old World, could not live here a twelve-month; it would be hooted as a farce, or prosecuted as a nuisance. The books which are written in Latin, to prepare their young priesthood for the questions addressed at the confessional to the virgin and the wife, if put into English, would raise a general storm of horror, disgust and indignation. The very fact that these parts of the system, openly acknowledged where it is paramount, are here veiled, modified, or stoutly denied, shows clearly that the American mind and heart are far from being ready to admit its pretensions. In our larger cities, among certain classes, through peculiar circumstances, apostacy from nominal Protestantism may occur. Insolence of riches, madness from too much learning, a romantic imagination, family ties, a desire of notoriety from opposition to the general sentiment, may have led some to please themselves with the

gorgeous, gloomy, or fantastic forms of those dark ages, when the ruffian noble, the bigot priest, and the royal fool, trampled on the neck the conscience and the heart of the many ; but such exceptions must be few, far fewer than instances of the reverse. No impression can be made upon the people generally. Place by the side of the most stately cathedral, furnished with all the appliances of idolatrous pomp, a plain meeting-house with the simple gospel in its pulpit, and we need not fear for the result. The multitude may enter the gorgeous pile, gaze curiously at the novel exhibitions, listen to the skilfully adjusted music ; but when they wish to worship God, it will be under the more lowly roof, where the mercy of the homeless Nazarene is offered to the poor, and their own voices can exult in the hallelujahs of praise, or falter out the accents of contrition.

It is notorious that civil liberty sprang from Protestantism ; it is equally certain that civil liberty will uphold Protestantism. Neither Protestantism nor civil liberty can attain their full strength, so long as the religion of the masses is under the control of the few. Only where, as among us, the state leaves the church to its independent actings, the energies of both may be symmetrically developed. As inevitably as that truth must triumph over error, and the Spirit of God over sin, the victory is ours, if we wield manfully only those weapons, which the King of mercy, peace and love has appointed for the armour of his sacramental host. To question this result, is to doubt that God reigns.

From such reasoning, the assertion is repeated, that

a far greater responsibility rests upon us, my fellow Christian citizens, than upon the subjects of a monarchy. How shall that responsibility be met?

With no disparagement to other means of Christian activity in the service of the church, our country and mankind, (but under a thorough conviction that when it trenches upon the prerogatives of the Christian parent or the Christian ministry, it has exceeded its legitimate sphere,) we believe the SUNDAY-SCHOOL SYSTEM admirably adapted, in the circumstances of our country, to effect, by God's blessing, the end at which every Christian should aim, the sanctification of our country. When we consider, that before forty years have passed away, the country will be wholly governed by those who are now children, no farther argument is necessary to prove the wisdom of following the Saviour's example, in choosing them, under God, for our strength, and their instruction from the word of God as the method of training them for their future career.

The art of reading is of course fundamental to such education, and, notwithstanding the opportunities so richly enjoyed by the youth of our land, there are not a few who are prohibited from acquiring it, during the secular week; but, on the sacred day, when God gives man freedom from labour on earth, that he may prepare for rest in heaven, we open the gate of knowledge for all within our reach. The cases must be very rare, in which, with such facilities for teaching or learning, any need grow up to manhood destitute of skill to trace the words of divine truth.

The art of reading is, however, but a small part of the necessary training. It may, in itself, be a curse,

and will be, if pains be not taken to render it a blessing. The press, though one of God's greatest gifts to man, like every other bounty of his, may be converted into a fruitful means of mischief. It would be, truly, most short-sighted folly, to lament the cheapness of publication in our day. Knowledge should be free as the air and light of heaven. If evil outwork the good, it is the fault of those who profess themselves to be the friends of good, for they have the same facilities. Yet who can see, without alarm, the prostitution of many partisan newspapers, or the multitude of sheets and pamphlet books flying through the land, or hawked about our streets, at prices almost nominal, filled with the most pungent provocatives to licentiousness, outrage and blasphemy, finding their account in pandering to the pruriency of lust, rancorous passions, and the enmity of the heart against God? To teach a child reading, and not to follow up the service by providing him with good books, and giving him counsel how to read them, is but to prepare him for the most dangerous forms of temptation in which bad men have colluded with hell to ruin immortal souls. For this necessity our SUNDAY-SCHOOL SYSTEM has provided. The teacher is the child's affectionate friend, and with him is sent a rich LIBRARY of hallowed volumes, carefully fitted to inculcate the best lessons, while they lead on the youthful reader by their pleasing style.

We may go further, and say, that no mental culture can be otherwise than hurtful, except as it is accompanied by moral instruction. If the heart be not inspired, strengthened, and guarded by right principles, both mind and heart will be mere abject slaves of that lower

nature to which they are conjoined. A child must be taught to know and feel his relative obligations, before he can be expected to control his selfish passions and grosser propensities. Nor can this be done, as some seem to think, by mere rules and maxims of virtue. No one would be satisfied now with the morals of the ancient heathen ; yet they had sayings and dogmas of virtue wellnigh as pure and full as those in Christian books. Teach our children no higher morals than those of Socrates and Seneca, and they will act like the false Athenians or the licentious Romans, who listened to the lectures of the one, or read the books of the other.

To constitute a sufficient moral *system*, there must be a recognition of one SUPREME, the original source of being, authority and wisdom, duty to whom includes, harmonizes and makes binding all other duties ; for else there will be a conflict of duties, rendering virtue uncertain, variable and inconsistent. To establish sufficient moral *principle* there must be proposed *motives* to do right, convincing the mind and controlling the heart, superior at all times and in all circumstances over every possible motive to do wrong. To direct, in moral *conduct* there must be an exhibition, by actual *example*, of the highest moral perfection. All these can be found only in Christianity. Hence we affirm that, though there are other auxiliary means, the BIBLE is fundamentally essential to the proper training of the young. Every attempt to build a sound education, except upon evangelical truths, will be a failure. For, besides that the Holy Scripture is a library of itself, containing the most ancient, authentic and satisfactory account of things in their causes, narrative the most simple and impres-

sive, biography the most honest and useful, eloquence the most powerful and persuasive, poetry the most sublime and beautiful, argument the closest and most profound, politics the justest and most liberal, and religion pure from the throne of God; it alone teaches morals with sufficient authority, motive, and example—the authority of God, the motives of eternity, and the example of Jesus Christ, God-in-man. Thus we find, that, in exact proportion as the Bible is read, useful knowledge, civil liberty and sound morals prevail.

It was the Reformation, aided by the press, that burst the chains of feudal oppression and scattered the darkness of long ignorance by the might and the light of the Bible, which the priest and the tyrant had hid from the souls of the people for ages; and now, where the Reformation has not prevailed, the people (I use the word in our wide republican sense) are yet in bondage, political and moral, as deep as when (to use the language of a Church of England homily) "the world was drowned in the pit of damnable idolatry by the space of eight hundred years." The world is indebted to such men as Wycliffe and Luther and Calvin and Zuingle, for the blessings of social morality and political freedom, more than to any others since the apostles. The reason is obvious. When men read their Bibles and learn the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free, that God is the only Master whose right it is to reign, that labour is honourable, and that all men are brothers, the masses upheaving with more than giant strength will fling off every tyrannous weight that presses them down. Without Christianity, the religion which holds open the simple and uncorrupted Book of

God for the trial of its claims, there is not, there never has been, there never can be, a free government and an enlightened people.

There are certainly great difficulties in the way of thus educating the youth of our own country. No human economy is in every respect perfect. Good among men is always somewhat mixed with evil, and it would be strange, indeed, if there were no seeming drawbacks to the immense political and religious advantages which we enjoy. Rash and treasonable is the tongue that would breathe discontent with our admirably adjusted laws, because of some temporary hindrance to a favourite plan of usefulness. It is our duty, as individual citizens, to supply what the government cannot extend without a dangerous violation of its fundamental harmony. It is impossible for the general government to provide education for the youth of our country ; that is the province of the State governments. But we have a wide land. The energetic character of our countrymen, restless to a fault, urges them far into the wilderness where settlements are small and sparingly scattered. Emigration is constantly and much in advance of education and the church. Unusual and persevering efforts must be made, or the children of our hardy backwoods-men will be grown up before opportunities will reach them of an education necessary to their future rank as participants in democratic rule.

Even in the older States there are serious impediments to a sufficient moral training by State schools. We have not now reference to the defective working of the best devised plans of public instruction, from the luke-warmness of the people to secure good results ; but to

other difficulties which lie deep in our national policy. By our wise national and State constitutions, religion is most properly left unregulated by law, while every citizen is protected in the rights of conscience. Free from partiality to any particular creed, our political system allows to all the equal and best privilege of being *let alone*. The theory is just, better for religion even than for the State; because never did a civil government grant more than protection to Christianity, without demanding in return an influence over religion far more hurtful to its purity than the most bitter persecution. If the secular power be permitted to sustain the altar, it will soon control the ministers of the altar, and substitute strange fire for the heaven-kindled flame. As we would deprecate such oppressions as those which characterize false forms of Christianity, we should avoid the slightest acknowledgment of any right in the State to act for the seeming advancement of our own religious views. Religious liberty and the rights of conscience have been purchased by too long a struggle and too much expense of blood and argument, now to be lightly ventured. Hence candour must acknowledge, that though there have been and may be exceptions, there is a real difficulty in the way of bringing evangelical religion (and no other is worthy the name) to bear upon our public schools. The infidel, the Papist, and other dangerous errorists, have far more than a pretext for opposing the power of God's pure word upon a theatre common to all. Whatever may be the honest purposes of Christians, they will find their philanthropic zeal in this matter plausibly, obstinately and often successfully met. We lose time, perhaps moral power, in

fighting a battle on such debateable ground. Our true policy is, by means, in methods, and on occasions undeniably our own, to outwork the enemies of truth and the friends of darkness. Let the laws teach as many as they can, or will, to read. Let us follow, and teach the rest that fundamental art. Then let us see to it that every one has the Bible to read, and, so far as we can, that every one be exhorted to read the Bible, and to read it aright. In this no man has a right to hinder us; and to this every school is an assistant.

It is because of its peculiar fitness to meet this exigency, that we claim, of all Christian patriots, support for the SUNDAY-SCHOOL SYSTEM, which teaches from the Book of God, on his Holy Day, the voluntary scholar, through the zealous kindness of the voluntary teacher.

Christians! patriots! Shall the children of our land, even the poorest, be made early wise in the fear of the Lord, that they may be prepared to exercise faithfully their part of the national sovereignty on earth, and then be crowned immortally as royal priests unto God and his Christ? Or shall they, abandoned by your luke-warmness to the evil influences everywhere at work, when grown up, ignorant and irreligious, curse the land by a foolish rule, and perish for ever.

Remember, that there is no school of sound morals open for the people, but the CHURCH and the SUNDAY-SCHOOL!

Establish Christian principles in the souls of our American youth, and you build our republic upon a rock, so that whatever storm may blow or flood come, it will not fall until in the final catastrophe the e--

itself is dissolved, and the kingdom of the new Jerusalem made perfect, in which all its citizens shall be princes, the younger brethren of Him who sits on the right hand of the throne, the children of God himself. Neglect this duty, and there are evils percolating through the basis of our institutions, which shall turn it, however firm it now appears, into a quicksand, when down must go the republic, with the political hope of the world, and bury with it deep in eternal ruin the souls of the people. As you love your country, the safety of your children's freedom, the salvation of your fellow sinners, and the honour of Him who alone can make us free, cherish the *American Sunday-school Union*, pray for it, give to it, and act in aid of it. Nor think you have done this, when you have opened schools for the children of Christian congregations. Go forth and gather the poor, the morally destitute, for whom the Sunday-school, like the gospel, was mainly intended. Nay, cease not until every child throughout our wide territory, from ocean to ocean, from the snow-capt mountain to the torrid plain, be invited to share with your own children the teachings of Jesus, the sanctification of the Spirit, and the hope of immortality. Amen.